

Application no. 10/798,204
Amendment dated: May 23, 2005
Reply to office action dated: February 23, 2005

REMARKS

Claims 1-19 are pending in the application. By this paper, claims 1-13, 15 and 18-19 have been amended. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-19 in light of the amendments and arguments herein are respectfully requested.

A. Claim Amendments

Applicants have amended claims 1-13, 15 and 18-19 to: (i) improve upon language in the method claims (viz. claims 10-19), for purposes of clarity only; and, (ii) change the form of the product claims (viz. claims 1-9) to product-by-process format, dependent upon the method claims, by reason that the subject laminate sheet is most aptly defined by its method of making. No new matter is added by these amendments which find support throughout the application and drawings as filed.

B. 35 USC § 112

The Examiner rejected original claim 6 on the basis that the limitation thereof "said first component" had no antecedent. However, following the amendments herein, this limitation is no longer present in this claim (or any other). Therefore, the present claim amendments have effectively overcome this objection. Withdrawal of the rejection of claim under 35 U.S.C. § 112 is respectfully requested.

C. 35 USC 102

The Examiner rejected claims 1-6 and 8-15, and 18-19 under 35 USC 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Wesselink (U.S. Patent No. 6,213,702). Applicants respectfully traverse this assertion and request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the same in view of the following submissions.

The method and laminate sheet disclosed by Wesselink are substantially dissimilar to those of applicants and, as well, substantially less desirable from a commercial/manufacturing standpoint. Unlike applicants, Wesselink uses a mechanical

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connection which is accomplished by means of a separate strip 8 component (column 4, lines 18-19).

More specifically, Wesselink discloses a comparatively complex method and product which require the following distinct and precise steps: first, Wesselink provides a laminate sheet (1) and a band (2) to be affixed to it; then, a separate strip (8) is shaped by Wesselink to match a fixed pattern of perforations (9) made in the band (2) so that the strip (8) can be mechanically aligned with, and fitted into, those perforations; and, finally, the strip (8) is manipulated by Wesselink over the sheet (1), as needed, so as to align its projections (either of the strip itself 10 or glue piece 12) with the band perforations (9) and fit them into those perforations until the strip (8) lies flush with the band (2). Additionally, for the embodiment of Figures 4 (a, b) and 7(a, b), Wesselink mills away an end section of the laminate sheet (1) so as to accommodate the thicknesses of the band (2) and strip (8) within the thickness of the sheet (1) (as distinguished from the embodiment of Figure 3 (a, b) in which the band (2) and strip (8) rest above the sheet (1) and thereby create a ridge along that length of the sheet (1)). By contrast, applicants' method requires no such mechanical shaping or fitting, or special strip component, and, therefore, avoids the costs of such precision manufacturing and placement (fitting) steps.

Instead, applicants' made the surprising discovery that layered sheets of laminate core material can be successfully laminated together as a whole, to produce core-to-core bonds (not simply mechanical connections per Wesselink), even with a flexible band material positioned in between such core layers, where that band has in it a plurality of apertures through which those bonds may form. As a result, applicants' have achieved a one-step core-to-core bonding of the laminate as a whole, while concurrently affixing a flexible band to the laminate.

In addition, applicants' method provides an advantageous laminate sheet product for which it is inherent that the entire surface area of the front and back of the sheet are usable for printing i.e. right up to the edge from which the flexible band extends. This contrasts sharply with Wesselink which is a multi-step lamination-and-band-affixation process and, in the result, produces a laminate sheet of which the edge area, being a

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separate strip material, is not useful for security printing (engraving). This particular distinction is shown by Appendix A enclosed herewith, which depicts embodiments of applicants' laminate sheet on the left-hand-side and Wesselink's laminate sheet on the right-hand-side. From the latter, a "dead" (unusable) strip along the edge of the laminate sheet is visible.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 10 recites limitations nowhere evident in Wesselink and is therefore patentable over this reference. Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. § 102 rejection of claim 10 is respectfully requested. Claims 1-6 and 8-15, and 18-19 are dependent from claim 10 and add further limitations thereto, and are allowable for the same reasons.

D. 35 USC § 103

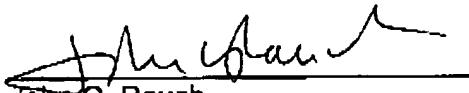
The Examiner also rejected claims 7 and 16-17 under 35 USC 103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Wesselink as applied to claims 1 and 10 and further in view of Akao (U.S. Patent No. 4,661,395) or Fitch (U.S. Patent No. 3,301,295). However, for the same reasons set out above with respect to the issue of anticipation, applicants submit that Wesselink is substantially dissimilar to the subject matter of the present claims and neither anticipates nor renders obvious that subject matter in view of either of Akao and Fitch. With respect to Akao and Fitch, each of these references is wholly unrelated to any method for making a laminate sheet of the herein claimed (or any other) and cannot assist anyone, in combination with Wesselink, to determine applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, applicants respectfully traverse this ground of claim rejection and request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the same.

For the foregoing reasons, it is submitted that the cited references do not anticipate or render obvious the subject matter of any of the present claims and this is true, whether the reference is considered alone or in combination with other prior art. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the claim rejections is respectfully requested.

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With this response, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Should the examiner deem a telephone conference to be of assistance in advancing the application to allowance, the examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,



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